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SUBJECT: SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA COVERAGE - VISIT OF UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

SIPDIS  
KAREN HUGHES

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SUMMARY  
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[11.](#) Turkish media coverage of Under Secretary Hughes' September 27-29 visit to Ankara and Istanbul was generally fair and factual. Coming on the eve of Turkey's historic start of EU accession talks, scheduled for October 3, coverage was less comprehensive than it might otherwise have been. The visual images of the Under Secretary's visit - touring shops in historic markets in Ankara and Istanbul, holding a Turkish child at the education park in Istanbul, speaking with women NGO representatives in Ankara - were very positive. The Under Secretary's comments following her meeting with MFA Undersecretary Ali Tuygan, especially her reassurance that the United States is looking at further steps to address the PKK issue, also received positive coverage. Reporting on Under Secretary Hughes' roundtable discussion with women's groups focused on the Turkish women's criticisms of US policy in Iraq. Most papers also carried the Under Secretary's responses to those criticisms, and implied that she had taken the criticism seriously and pledged to pass on what she heard to President Bush. The Under Secretary's meeting with religious leaders in Istanbul received scant press attention, as press access was limited. Most media picked up the Under Secretary's positive comments about Turkey, the Turkish people, and Istanbul. Press commentary on the visit was also limited, and focused on the need for the US to follow words with concrete actions. Ironically, the most negative portrayal of the visit came when some Turkish dailies reprinted excerpts of articles written by the US traveling press. End Summary.

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NEWS REPORTING FAIR AND FACTUAL  
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[12.](#) Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes visited Ankara and Istanbul September 27-29 for meetings with government officials, NGOs, and religious leaders. Coverage of the visit in the Turkish media was fair and factual. A summary of the coverage in major dailies follows:

"Hurriyet" -- mainstream secular (cir. 520,000) that is Turkey's most influential daily. "We Need Your Help to Improve Our Image" (page 24), September 29, 2005

US Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes, the person trying to improve President George Bush's image, acknowledged to Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul that "President Bush is aware of the reaction of people in the region to his Iraq policy." Hughes met with Undersecretary Ali Tuygan before being received by FM Gul. She informed them that she wanted to make her visit to the region, including to Turkey, go beyond just a public relations effort for her country. Hughes said that she gives great importance to Turkey in the effort to improve the US image in the region, and she asked for support and views from Ankara on this issue. Hughes acknowledged that the American people are not well informed about countries in the region, that she had brought 20 American journalists with her, and that her trip was aimed at providing the public with first-hand information on the region. Gul told Hughes that improving America's image in Turkey would require the United States to take concrete steps against the PKK. He also reminded Hughes that Turkey had asked the United States to begin direct flights or ship visits to northern Cyprus in order to alleviate the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots.

Speaking to reporters, Hughes said that the United States has made a commitment to the Turkish people on the PKK issue, and that work on that issue is continuing. She reiterated that the Americans view the PKK in the same way they view al-Qaida. Hughes said that the United States and Turkey need each other in order to best advance the interests of their people. She noted that the two countries "shared common values such as democracy, respect for human rights, and women's rights."

Hughes later met with representatives from representatives

of various women's NGOs. She had some difficult minutes there when many of the women criticized US policy in Iraq. KA-DER member Fatma Nevin Vargun called on the United States to end wars that lead to poverty. Hughes responded that, as a mother, she also did not like war, but added that sometimes war is necessary to protect the peace. Another KA-DERR member, Nurdan Bernard, criticized the US for not taking decisive action against the PKK. Hughes answered that the US views the PKK as a terrorist organization no different from al-Qaida. Following the discussion with NGOs, Hughes made a brief tour of the castle area. She chatted with shopkeepers, and bought a blue bead. Hughes subsequently left Ankara for Istanbul, where she met with representatives of all religions at Topkapi Palace. Hughes said that President Bush had specifically asked her to meet with religious leaders, and described the meeting as "a very good experience."

"Yeni Safak": Islamist-oriented, pro-government (circ. 120,000); "An Image Can't be Corrected With Blue Beads" (page 1), September 29, 2005

Experts said that Hughes' mission to improve the US image in the region will be difficult. They added that "an image can't be improved by an individual. Blue beads won't be enough." Yeditepe University Professor of Psychiatry Dr. Arif Verimli noted that Hughes had used body language in an effort to appeal directly to the emotions of the Turkish people. "Especially having her picture taken with the blue bead was an attempt to appeal to the emotions of Turks. But having a picture of Hughes with a blue bead, which has an important place in Turkish culture, won't be enough to fix the image overnight." Ankara University Professor of Psychology Dr. Ali Donmez said that "Hughes seemed sincere. But Bush's image is at such a point that a few people aren't going to be able to repair it in a short period of time."

"Jet Public Diplomacy For Bush's Image" (page 14): Hughes met with representatives of a number of women's NGOs. When some of them criticized US policy in Iraq, she answered that "as a mother, I also don't like war. But sometimes it is necessary to go to war to protect the peace." From Cengelhan in the Ankara Castle, Hughes visited shopkeepers, examining headscarves especially, before buying a blue bead. Hughes later went to Istanbul, where she visited the Fındıkzade Education Park sponsored by the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation. Hughes greeted the children by saying "merhaba" in Turkish, urged the students to visit the United States when they grow up, and made a donation of English-language books. She then moved on to Topkapi Palace where, following a brief tour, she listened to the Koran being read in the Holy Trust section. She spoke for a time to a Turkish woman in a headscarf who was touring the palace, and to a couple from Bahrain. Hughes met for about an hour with representatives of various religions. During the meeting, she mentioned tolerance, and said that Turkey could be a source of inspiration for religious tolerance for the rest of the world. Hughes said she had been impressed by the hospitality, warmth, and directness of the Turkish people.

"Radikal": liberal intellectual (circ. 45,000)  
"Hughes Strikes Through Her Charisma" (page 6), September 29, 2005

State Department Under Secretary Karen Hughes, who arrived in Turkey as US President George Bush's "image guru," learned that Ankara's image criteria include "concrete steps on Cyprus and the PKK." Hughes was sharply criticized by women's rights activists, who told her "not to ask for cooperation from us on the war." Hughes, who is responsible for public diplomacy at the State Department, met first with MFA Undersecretary Ali Tuygan. Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Hughes said that Turkey and the United States need each other in order to best serve the interests of their people. She said the two countries have shared values that include democracy, respect for human rights, and women's rights. Hughes added that the US supports Turkey's membership in the EU, and reiterated that "we condemn the PKK just as we condemn al-Qaida."

Hughes met later with women's rights activists at the Ankara Castle. Serpil Sancar of KA-DER said that "we can cooperate on freedom and issues of daily life, but not on war, violence, and arms." Hidayet Sefkatli Koksal of the Capital Women's Platform, recalled that she had made efforts and prayers to prevent the motion from being approved by the Turkish Parliament on March 1, 2003. Koksal continued: "I know that you are angry with us because of March 1. But I am bothered every time I see women in children in a photograph from Iraq. Until this issue is resolved, it is difficult to talk about good things. It disturbs me to see American preachers in suits and ties on GOD-TV giving sermons praising the war. We are trying to prevent Islamic fundamentalism. You need to struggle against evangelical fundamentalism." Hughes responded that the US is working

together with Iraq: "The United States will continue this struggle until it is won. No parent in America wants to lose their children in a war. The decision to go to war was made with great difficulty. I saw how much pain my friend President Bush went through in reaching this decision. Women in the time of Saddam were not better off than the women in today's Iraq. The women in Afghanistan are thanking us."

"Sabah": mainstream secular (circ. 450,000), "Bush's Image Maker Came to Turkey to Make Turks Love Her, But." September 29, 2005

At her meeting with representatives of women's NGOs, Karen Hughes tried to justify the war by saying that it had saved Iraqi women from being raped, and that President Bush agonized over the decision to go to war; but in the end, her justifications were not convincing. Karen Hughes, who helped President Bush win the elections by giving him advice on his image, heard lots of complaints from women in Turkey, where she came to rebuild the US image. Hughes, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy at the State Department, was

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the target of the women organizations representatives' rage against Bush for the war in Iraq.

Hughes has been tasked to rebuild the US image damaged by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She came to Ankara after visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and met with women's groups as the first event in her schedule. Hughes met with representatives of the Association for Supporting Women Candidates (KA-DER) and other women's NGOs at Cengelhan, in the Ankara Castle. Hughes began her remarks by praising Ataturk and Turkish women. She said that her job is to foster relations between the US and other countries, and that Turkish women could take the lead. But when the women started to speak, she received unexpected responses.

After they completed their remarks, representatives of the women NGOs presented gifts to Hughes before departing. It was noticed that the American journalists accompanying Hughes on her trip to the Middle East showed great interest in the anti-militarist Turkish women. Hughes said that friends are supposed to talk to each other frankly, and said she appreciated the views that were shared. She then went on a short tour through Ankara Castle. Hughes went into shops, looked at souvenirs, chatted with shopkeepers, and bought herself a blue bead. Hughes showed special interest in children. She urged them to learn English and go see the United States.

"Milliyet" (circ. 320,000); "She Loved Istanbul," September 30, 2005

Karen Hughes, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy at the US State Department, who was on a Middle East tour to improve the image of US President George Bush, visited historical and tourist places of Istanbul on the last stop of her tour. Following her visits, which were covered only by "Milliyet," Hughes said that "Turkey and Turks have fascinated me. I am very impressed by Istanbul. I have decided to come back to Istanbul with my husband next summer for holiday." Professor Filiz Ozer, an art historian, accompanied Hughes, who first went to Hagia Sophia in a heavy rain. Smiling continually at the people around her, Hughes later went to the Grand Bazaar to do some shopping and chat with shopkeepers. Hughes visited carpet shops and asked for information on antique kilims. She drank apple tea that was offered to her, and tasted simit bought from a street seller. The shopkeepers presented Hughes with a blue bead to ward off the evil eye.

Answering our questions on her way out of the Grand Bazaar, she said "I am very happy that I have come here and met with you. It's been a great experience for me." Hughes also said that she had been "fascinated" by Istanbul: "I've realized that I should spare more time for this city. The people are incredibly welcoming and hospitable. I loved the Turks. Istanbul is a place that has to be seen, definitely. No matter which way I turn, I come across a marvelous view." Emphasizing that she had had a great evening and very useful meetings, Hughes said "I wish I could stay here longer and do some more shopping. I will come back as soon as possible and do shopping for my house." Hughes, who will prepare an extensive report for President Bush on Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, left for the US on a private plane yesterday afternoon.

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INTERVIEW FOCUSES ON US-TURKISH BILATERAL ISSUES  
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13. As part of her media outreach in Turkey, the Under Secretary interviewed with Ferai Tinc, foreign news editor

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of Turkey's leading national daily, "Hurriyet." The interview focused on the main issues in the US-Turkish bilateral relationship. A translation of the interview as it appeared in "Hurriyet" follows:

"BUSH'S IMAGE GURU TO RETURN WITH GUL'S MESSAGE"  
An interview by Ferai Tinc  
"Hurriyet," September 30, 2005

"As I go back to America, I am carrying a message that has impressed me very much".

The message that Bush's so-called "image guru," Karen Hughes, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy at the US State Department, is carrying is from Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul.

At our meeting in Istanbul, the last stop on her tour of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, Hughes explained the message that she was taking to Washington as follows:

"Listen, I want to tell you something. It has really touched me. When I met with Foreign Minister Gul yesterday, he made an effective explanation. He told me about the difference in mentality between us and the people on the streets in Turkey. He said 'When you look at Iraq, Iran, and Syria from America, you see them as countries "over there"; but they are our neighbors.' Now I will take these words to America, to the policy meetings at the State Department. In the coming months, or weeks, or even days, when it is time to address these issues, you will see us saying 'this issue concerns Turkey's neighbors, so maybe we should talk to Turkey about it first.' That is what I am taking with me from Turkey back to Washington."

Describing the aim of her visit not as "correcting the US image," but "listening to important allies, and ensuring that their views are reflected in the US policies," Hughes gave interesting answers to my questions. My questions and her answers follow:

Q: We hear news that it is now Syria's turn after Iraq. Is that true?

HUGHES: No. Iraq was a special situation. People shouldn't just look at Iraq and think what happened there will also happen somewhere else. What we expect from the Government in Syria is to change its behavior and stop allowing insurgents and terrorists to infiltrate to Iraq across its borders.

Q: What do you expect from Turkey on this?

HUGHES: We don't expect anything from Turkey. It is in the interest of Turkey as much as it is in the interest of the United States that Syria stop supporting the insurgents in Iraq, and interfering in the affairs of Lebanon and Palestine.

We should do more on the PKK

Q: Why has the US effort to address the PKK issue been ineffective? It is claimed that the US needs the PKK to destabilize Iran and Syria. Is that true?

HUGHES: We do not cooperate with terrorists, full stop. PKK is a terrorist organization. We support Turkey. We share information with Turkey about the activities of the PKK. We have started to work with the Turkish Government to dry up the financial resources of the PKK. We encourage the Iraqi Government to cooperate with Turkey in its fight against the PKK. The PKK kills innocent people every day. We understand the concerns of the Turkish public. As our National Security Advisor said, we should contribute more to resolve this issue. When I return, I will draw our government's attention to this issue and tell them that more should be done to overcome the PKK. We should give Turkey the confidence that we will do that.

The isolation of Turkish Cypriots should come to an end

Q: Do you have any new approaches to resolve the Cyprus issue?

HUGHES: We support the UN's solution process and the ending of the isolation of the area under Turkish authority.

Q: The civic turmoil that resulted from the war in Iraq threatens the region. When will you withdraw from Iraq? Why were the Turkmen targeted in Tal Afar?

HUGHES: We will leave Iraq as soon as Iraq becomes capable of governing itself. Yes, the Turkish Government and Turkish people were against the war. But we have to keep going, with Turkey's support, to achieve a democratic,

united, and stable Iraq. We are trying to make sure that the rights of all groups in Iraq are respected.

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